



Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
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1. Public Meetings Will Discuss Population Status and Management Options for Bobcats and River Otters
2. Bike Ride Through South America Aimed at Preserving Rainforest Habitat For Neotropical Migrants – by Lowell Washburn [electronic photo available]
3. Mild Winter Gives Wildlife a Boost – by Joe Wilkinson
4. Red Rock Bald Eagle Appreciation Day
5. Water Trail Grants Will Fund Diverse Waterway Projects
6. Evergreen Up Your Landscape
7. Walleye Season Closes Feb. 15 on Iowa Great Lakes
8. Natural Resource Commission to Meet Thursday in Des Moines

PUBLIC MEETINGS WILL DISCUSS POPULATION STATUS AND MANAGEMENT OPTIONS FOR BOBCATS AND RIVER OTTERS

CLEAR LAKE – The population status and potential management options for bobcats and river otters will be discussed at a series of state-wide public meetings.

Both bobcats and river otters have shown substantial population increases in recent years. Bobcat numbers have grown on their own, to the point where the animal was de-listed from the threatened species list in 2003. River otters were first re-introduced in Iowa in 1985 and have grown to the point where their presence has been confirmed in all 99 counties.

Management scenarios for both species will be outlined at the meetings. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is taking comments on a potential river otter trapping season, and a potential bobcat hunting and trapping season. Both seasons under consideration would be limited to certain areas of the state, and have quotas, with the possibility of expanding statewide in the future. Potential harvest of both species also takes into consideration maintaining population growth and distribution throughout the state for otters and bobcats.

Details on potential management scenarios under consideration by the DNR are available at www.iowadnr.com, then click on wildlife. There is an opportunity to send comments directly from the page.

The following information meetings are scheduled.

Feb. 7, Washington County Conservation Commission at Marr Park, Washington, at 7 p.m.

Feb. 10, Atlantic Public Library, 507 Poplar St., Atlantic, at 7 p.m.

Feb. 23, F & M Bank, backdoor, alley entrance, 101 East Main St., Manchester, at 7 p.m.

Feb. 28, Iowa Lakes Community College, 1900 Grande Avenue, Spencer at 7 p.m.

March 8, Pin Oak Nature Center, Chariton, at 7 p.m.

Both species are open to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources depredation policy. For more information, contact Ron Andrews, state furbearer biologist, at 641-357-3517.

Public comment is being accepted throughout the process for both Otters and Bobcats, which seeks final approval by June.

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[electronic photo available]

**NORTH IOWA NATIVE LAUNCHES ENVIRONMENTAL FUND-RAISER
BIKE RIDE THROUGH SOUTH AMERICA AIMED AT
PRESERVING RAINFOREST HABITAT FOR NEO-TROPICAL
MIGRANTS**

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Iowa native Dan Schutte has just tackled the biggest challenge of his life.

The task at hand is to successfully complete a 3,500-mile bike ride leading through some of the most hostile terrain on the entire South American continent. The grueling trek will traverse the windswept high altitude plains of Patagonia, rugged backroad trails of the Andes mountain range, and across the grassy pampas of northern Argentina. The ride will ultimately terminate in Paraguay's San Rafael Preserve. The Preserve is comprised of Interior Atlantic rainforest -- a tropical, forested ecosystem best noted for its unfathomable biodiversity.

The marathon ride began on Monday [Jan. 9], at Ushuaia, Argentina, which is literally the southernmost city on earth. Schutte hopes to conclude the event around mid-April. The purpose of the three and a half months adventure is to raise funds and increase global awareness for the plight of South America's rapidly diminishing forests. [Schutte has studied rainforest ecosystems in Central and South America, and since 2003 has

served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Paraguay.]

"While working as a Peace Corps volunteer, I've had a firsthand opportunity to be exposed to some of the world scale environmental and social-economic problems that exist across much of South America," said Schutte. "What I've come to realize is that many of these issues [such as large scale deforestation] do not just affect me or the other people living in this part of the world. Many of the things that go on here directly effect people in America and vice versa.

"There are lots of examples. Every single day, the United States imports things like sugar, sesame, and even soy from the country of Paraguay. One of my goals is to have people start thinking about where their food comes from and how it was grown. Back home, people criticize the Third World farmer for cutting down the rainforest but then turn around and put that same farmer's sugar on their table and don't even realize it. That's why I think it's so important to globally raise the level of environmental awareness toward major world ecosystems. That's one of the main reasons I decided to do the bike ride."

Planning for the ride began early in 2004 when Schutte and fellow volunteer, Iain Clark, discussed what they would do when their Peace Corps service ended. Both had a passion for biking and were interested in a big ride. Determined to "achieve something positive" with that ride, they eventually decided to turn it into a fundraiser for the San Rafael forest system. The bikers decided that every penny raised during the ride would go directly toward the preservation of this unique ecosystem.

PARAGUAY'S SAN RAFAEL FOREST PRESERVE is a world class, natural resource. Dominated by humid, subtropical [deciduous] hardwood forest, the rugged landscape supports an extraordinarily high level of biodiversity. Easily ranking as one of South America's most significant examples of interior Atlantic forest, the preserve is home to more than two dozen globally threatened or near threatened bird species. It also harbors more endemic bird species than any other site in Paraguay.

During the winter months, local bird populations are bolstered by migrants from across North America. Barn swallows, purple martins, sedge wrens, nighthawks, snipe, warblers, and others all flock to this food rich environment. It's no stretch to imagine that some of these travelers are birds that will nest in your neighborhood this summer.

So far, around 10,000 acres of the San Rafael forest have recently been protected. Schutte hopes to raise funds to preserve an additional 2,500 acres of this unique ecosystem. Considering current land values, the goal does seem reasonable.

A single, one time donation of just \$210 will purchase [save] 2.5 acres of San Rafael's Atlantic forest habitat.

Unfortunately, those land prices cut both ways. Those who wish to slash and burn their way across the landscape can, of course, buy rainforest acreage for the same price.

Consequently, the San Rafael region is becoming rapidly degraded as large scale Brazilian ag interests clear forests [mainly for soybean production] to the north while small, independent farmers cut from the south.

"When I was back home [in Iowa] it was easy to read about people destroying the rainforest and get mad about that. But now I've actually been working with the people who are doing that and I see that they don't have any other options. They're just poor farmers who get no help from any government program and are just trying to feed their kids. What seemed like a simple issue has become very complicated. It definitely changes your perspective."

"There are currently some very big, global issues that we all need to be aware of. For example, whether we all want to believe it or not, global climate change is happening and those changes will eventually affect everyone. The rapid deforestation of South America contributes to that change and should be a concern of everyone everywhere.

"The preservation of migratory and endemic birdlife is obviously important, but there are much deeper issues tied to the rainforest. Loose the forest and you loose biodiversity and impact global climate change. You also loose significant supplies of fresh water. Cutting the forest to gain a couple of years of marginal farming isn't the answer. We're all in this together and that's the message I want to come across back home."

EDITOR'S NOTE: To learn more about Dan Schutte's bike ride and the importance of preserving South American rainforest for Iowa birds, look in the Jan/Feb. issue of The Iowa Conservationist Magazine. [Find the magazine on line at iowadnr.com] To learn more about the San Rafael Preserve, follow the ride's progress through a trek diary, or to contribute to the ride; visit the official web site at www.pla.net.py/sanrafael

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MILD WINTER GIVES WILDLIFE A BOOST

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

You could almost call this, *The Winter That Wasn't*. So far, anyway. Oh, December made us appreciate snow blowers, four-wheel drive and huddling around the wood stove, but January—and now early February--are doing a pretty good impression of late March and April, across much of Iowa.

That's great news for pheasants, songbirds and other wildlife dependent on food sources and habitat to make it through until spring. "If we can continue through winter without a major blizzard, that bodes well for carryover of brood stock," offers Todd Bogenschutz, upland game biologist for the Department of Natural Resources. "January's weather was nothing but positive for pheasants, and other game animals."

That brown landscape means food is more accessible to wildlife. The flock of 30 pheasants you saw in mid-December, highlighted against a deep, white coat of snow, is still feeding. However they don't have to stay out as long to scratch through to the waste grain—or gulp down so much of it—to provide the energy to stay warm. And when they are feeding, they aren't as visible to you, or the predators relying on them for their *own* winter survival. Critical roosting and escape habitat also opens up, as the snow recedes.

Bogenschutz estimates that for every week of snow cover, three percent of an area's hen pheasants will die. He knows birds were lost in December. Around his Boone office, 14 inches of fluffy snow teamed up with single digit temperatures. "We would see big groups of birds just huddled; in a sort of torpor. Hens would just sit on the road. It was more energy efficient for them *not* to move around," he recalled. "They faced a negative energy balance."

As bare spots and milder weather emerged, the outlook warmed. More habitat became available for escape and roosting cover. More fields were exposed. "They still focus on waste grain for food," assured Bogenschutz. "It is high in carbohydrates. It still gets cold at night. They have to stay warm with high-energy food."

That milder outlook boosts prospects for other wildlife species, too. The steady stream of songbirds at my feeders has been a mere trickle the last few weeks. "They don't need to eat as much and a lot of the food sources in the wild are exposed," agrees Brenda Wilson, from the Bird's Eye View store in Coralville. Still, she recommends keeping backyard feeders stocked. "One; even though birds visit your feeder, it is just one stop along the way. Two; it still gets cold at night," reminds Wilson. "The feeders provide a pretty good food source." Besides, she notes, people just enjoy the show as songbirds hit the feeders for easy meals.

There is still plenty of winter yet. In fact, not all of Iowa is basking in the relative tropics of 40 and 50 degrees. "We are starting to thaw up here. Some bare patches are appearing now," relays Neil Heiser, wildlife supervisor from the DNR's Spirit Lake district office. Snow and cold temperatures came—and stayed—there. Just in the last week or two have bare patches emerged from the snow cover. "I'm sure we lost some birds. Much of that snow was covered with a layer of ice," says Heiser. "(However) we are in much better shape than we were a couple weeks ago."

And so are the birds. But about the time you want to proclaim an early spring—and the crew at Hawkeye Wildlife Area near North Liberty is reporting more mallards showing up recently—you have to balance it with memories of late March snowstorms.

Wild Hog Shows up at Dubuque

Discovery of a wild hog is causing concern among wildlife officials in northeast Iowa. Though a female, it belongs to the European species commonly referred to as 'Russian boars.' Isolated reports of individual hogs and small herds are reported each

year in Iowa; raising concerns that the species...or other feral hogs that have escaped confinement might be spreading. "The concern is where it came from, and whether there are any others," cautioned DNR wildlife biologist Mike Griffin, who identified the thick furred, 200-plus pound sow last week, at Sageville, on the north edge of Dubuque. "These animals can cause heavy damage to habitat and crops, through their rooting behavior."

Roving herds of the Russian boars wreak havoc in pockets of the Deep South, in the U.S.

Since the Russian boar is an exotic animal, in Iowa, it falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, not the Department of Natural Resources. The most visible 'outbreak' of wild hogs in Iowa has been in the far southwest corner where, last summer, wildlife workers and hunters trapped or shot 34 and reported two other road kills around Riverton.

Griffin says he could not determine whether the Dubuque hog had been shot, hit by a vehicle or died in some other manner. He could not rule out that the hog might have been dumped, since it was found at the edge of a parking lot. He did note that a hole in its ear indicated it had been tagged at one point.

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RED ROCK BALD EAGLE APPRECIATION DAY

BOONE – The 18th annual Red Rock Bald Eagle Appreciation Day is Feb. 11 at the Pella Community Center, in Pella, and will feature live eagles and other raptors including presentations by staff from the Raptor Center in St. Paul, MN.

"This is a tremendous opportunity to see bald eagles up close and personal," said Pat Schlarbaum, wildlife technician with the Iowa DNR.

Outside viewing of eagles will be located at the Iron Bridge just downstream from Red Rock reservoir dam. Wildlife professionals will be assisting the public in learning more about eagles. Spotting scopes and binoculars will be provided.

School groups will visit the center and see the eagles on Friday. The event open to the public will begin at 9 a.m. Saturday, and have programs hourly from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., when the events draw to a close.

The Pella Community Center is in the refurbished high school building two blocks south of the square, on the corner of Union St. and Broadway. Red Rock Bald Eagle Appreciation Day is hosted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Marion County Conservation Board, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

For more information, contact Laura Conrad at U.S. Army Corps at 641-828-7522 or Pat Schlarbaum DNR Wildlife Diversity technician 515-432-2823.

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WATER TRAIL GRANTS WILL FUND DIVERSE WATERWAY PROJECTS

A new Department of Natural Resources scoring committee, with two staff and two citizen members ranking grants, has identified \$49,008 in projects that will be funded under the Iowa DNR Water Trails Program. A total of \$73,118 was requested, and the projects selected will help leverage \$185,347 worth of projects.

Examples of projects include:

- A lake-to-lake portage system in Black Hawk County that forms a loop utilizing the Cedar River, where Boy Scouts will provide labor for land-trail connections and canoeists can practice skills necessary for wilderness paddling in places such as the Boundary Waters Wilderness Canoe Area.
- Support for signage and a remote canoe-camping access on the Des Moines-Boone Rivers Water Trail, a cooperative effort among Boone, Webster, and Hamilton counties that includes 132 miles of point-to-point water trail.
- A Des Moines River headwaters trail in Emmet County for tools that volunteers will use to create low-impact access paths to the West Fork of the Des Moines River.
- Funding to assist the Iowa Whitewater Coalition for public outreach meetings and low-head dam safety studies in support of water trails in Polk, Boone, Webster, Story, and Black Hawk counties.

Project	Applicant	Amount awarded	Amount leveraged
Skunk River Water Trail	Story County Conservation Board	\$6,000	\$42,420
Cedar Valley Paddlers Trail	Black Hawk County Conservation Board	\$6,701	\$21,283
Iowa River Water Trail	Hardin County Conservation Board	\$5,283	\$1,321
Emmet County Water Trail	Emmet County Water Trail Association	\$7,264	\$6,400
Des Moines-Boone Water Trail	Boone County Board of Supervisors	\$10,150	\$31,180
Middle Raccoon Water Trail	Carroll County Conservation Board	\$3,610	\$2,000
Reconnecting The Rivers	Iowa Whitewater Coalition	\$10,000	\$50,000

“Each of these projects is an excellent example of the DNR cooperating with local units of government and the non-profit sector to improve quiet recreation opportunities on Iowa waterways,” said Nate Hooegeveen, Iowa Water Trails coordinator.

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EVERGREEN UP YOUR LANDSCAPE

AMES - Adapted pines, spruces, firs and even junipers provide a little green color to Iowa’s long and brown winter landscape. Evergreens, or more appropriately “conifers” for cone bearing, make the landscape green and provide critical winter wildlife habitat, offer protection from cold winds and increase property values.

To select the right conifer for the landscape, first, keep in mind that except for bald cypress, most conifers adapted to Iowa’s climate and soils like dry, well-drained sites. Second, most conifers though small in the beginning, grow large and need at least 15 to 25 feet of space from the home, other trees and overhead power lines. Finally, during their first year, conifers need lots of TLC with regular watering right up to the time that the ground freezes for the roots to take hold.

Pines adapted well to Iowa include the native white pine, its long-needled cousin, the red pine and short needled cousin, the jack pine. Scotch pine, Iowa’s favorite Christmas tree, generally has a short life span of 25 to 30 years.

Spruces possess dense pyramidal shapes and are great for windbreaks and shelterbelts as well as provide dense nest and hiding cover for wildlife. Iowa foresters recommend adapted Norway and white spruce for conservation plantings and Black Hills spruce for ornamental sites. The Colorado blue spruce is no longer recommended by foresters due to needle blight diseases that shorten its life span.

Junipers or cedars, such as the native red cedar, possess scale-like needles and reach 25 to 30 feet tall on a variety of soils. Although these trees grow wild in many parts of the state, red cedar is wonderful shelterbelt tree due to its dense foliage.

Contact the State Forest Nursery to discuss “ever greening,” at 1-800-865-2477. Evergreen seedlings are available for \$25 to \$30 per 100 plants with a minimum order of 500 plants, or choose a “create-a-packet” containing up to four different species for a total of 200 plants for \$90. The State Forest Nursery currently has a good supply of 8 to 24-inch bare root conifers available for spring delivery.

Orders are accepted by phone or on-line at www.iowadnr.com/forestry/. Visa and MasterCard are accepted. Go to www.iowatreeplanting.com for local nursery and garden centers that offer conifers adapted to specific landscapes.

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WALLEYE SEASON CLOSES FEB. 15 ON IOWA GREAT LAKES

SPIRIT LAKE – The walleye fishing season on Spirit, East and West Okoboji lakes will close on Feb. 15, and will open again at 12 a.m., May 6. Muskie season on the same lakes closed Dec. 1, and will open on May 20.

For more information on fishing regulations, go to www.iowadnr.com.

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NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION TO MEET THURSDAY IN DES MOINES

DES MOINES - The Natural Resource Commission (NRC) of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will meet at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, Feb. 9, in the fourth floor conference room, Wallace State Office Bldg., in Des Moines. The meeting is open to the public.

Commissioners have added the Iowa DNR Water Trails Program Grants to the agenda as an information item.

Members of the NRC are Joan Schneider, Randy Duncan, Carol Kramer, Richard Francisco, Janice Marcantonio, Lennis Moore and Liz Garst. The DNR Director is Jeffrey Vonk.

The following is the agenda for the February meeting.

- Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes of Dec. 22 Meeting and Jan. 18 Meeting
- Director's Remarks
- Land Acquisition
- Anderson Prairie Complex, Emmet County – KP Land L.L.C.
- Anderson Prairie Complex, Emmet County – Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
- Construction Projects
- Lost Grove Lake Consultant Contract
- Fish and Wildlife Budget Adjustment
- Final Rule – Chapter 94, Nonresident Deer Hunting
- Final Rule – Chapter 114, Nuisance Wildlife Control
- Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 82, Sport Fishing Rule
- Fisheries Habitat with Local Entities Program Grant Review
- Wildlife Habitat with Local Entities Program Grant Review
- Conservation and Recreation Donations
- Donation and Recognition Policy

- Forestry Stewardship Plans on Wildlife Management Areas
- Iowa DNR Water Trails Program Grants
- General Discussion
- Items for Next Meeting, March 9, at Honey Creek, Lake Rathbun

For more information, contact Karyn Stone at 515-281-8650.

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